

SSCI

# Charter Must Invigorate CIA

In the aftermath of the Watergate scandal, the Central Intelligence Agency came under fire for alleged abuses of power from planning assassinations to overthrowing democratic governments. And for the first time since its creation following World War II, it became the subject of far-ranging investigations that very nearly ended its effectiveness as an intelligence arm of government.

Headline hunters in Congress used leaks from investigating bodies to enhance their images as watchdogs of the people's business. Others used what had been — and should have remained — classified information as a means of discrediting the CIA and all U.S. intelligence gathering agencies.

Hugely enjoying the three-ring circus from reserved seats were the Soviets' KGB and their affiliates in Eastern Europe, Asia and Cuba. At the same time, our friends in every corner of the world wondered, sometimes aloud, if the Congress and Justice Department weren't on an LSD trip or simply gone mad.

If morale were not low enough at that point, Mr. Carter's new director, Adm. Stansfield Turner, added the last straw by announcing a reduction in force of 800 employees, among whom were some of the top operatives in terms of both effectiveness and seniority. According to knowledgeable insiders, both the morale and the effectiveness of the agency is still at a dangerously low level, and cooperation with intelligence units of other governments is still an iffy business.

Congress, still in a crusading spirit, now is in the throes of writing a new charter for the agency. But if it learned anything about the real nature of intelligence gathering and espionage and counter espionage during the recent investigations, the effort of the bill-writing Senate Intelligence Committee doesn't reflect it. Like some regulatory agency it has helped to create, the Senate committee is developing the new charter in terms of strict cans and can'ts, dos and don'ts.

Even Clark Clifford, not exactly a cold war warrior, has had to adopt elementary language to explain to committee members the special nature of such an intelligence agency as the CIA. But not before he admonished the committee by saying that he hoped the nation is over "the emotional period" regarding alleged CIA abuses. He very quickly went to the heart of the matter by saying that a new charter must not be written in terms of permitted and forbidden actions.

Actually, Clifford, who helped in the creation of the agency, could have advised that the new charter should not depart very much from the original mandate. To remove the possibility of abuses of power, the charter could make it mandatory that no covert action be planned without the signed approval of the President, with the additional provision that the President notify the appropriate committees of Congress. Members of the oversight committees should also agree that no communications from the President regarding covert actions would be divulged to anyone outside the committee and any member found to be leaking information would be censured and banned from attending committee sessions or removed from the committee.

Congress, especially members writing laws governing the duties and conduct of intelligence agencies, must understand that the United States does not write the rules of international intelligence gathering and espionage. It should understand that the KGB and agents of other Communist countries such as Red China and Cuba have but two rules: Protect the interests of their own countries at any cost in life and treasure, and damage and discredit the United States and its friends wherever possible.

The President of the United States must have as free a hand as reasonable in using the CIA, and he must have the fullest support of Congress, if the agency is ever again to be an effective and efficient instrument for national security.

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